Consumer Attitudes towards Functional Food and Drink - UK - February 2013

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"While this greater regulation is intended to clarify the picture for consumers, as 58% of adults think that functional claims are exaggerated/misleading, it may in fact fail to do so in the short term, if brands continue to use consumer expectations of ingredients to their advantage."

– Chris Wisson, Senior Drinks Analyst

In this report we answer the key questions:

- What impact have the new regulations had on functional claims?
- How can functional brands engage consumers by combating scepticism?
- How can operators target the next generation of functional users?
- Can functional brands also be positioned as delivering on taste?

Despite an apparently high level of scepticism and mistrust of functional brands, many brands in the market are still performing well as consumers look for simple ways of improving their health. Only 23% of adults bypass functional food and drink products completely, with 82% using them on a weekly basis, underlining the extent to which they are now an ingrained part of many consumers' grocery repertoires.

The functional food and drink market has seen a great deal of upheaval as new EFSA guidelines have changed the specifics of what benefits products can and cannot claim to offer, posing a particular problem for the likes of Activia and Yakult , which previously positioned themselves as aiding digestive health. On the one hand, this tightening up on claims may provide operators with the clarity to innovate and plan for the future with confidence. However, it may also lead to an increasingly conservative approach, with brands being less inclined to invest in products which could offer consumers new and more impactful functional benefits.

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